

# Castlemaine Naturalist

July 2018

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Monthly newsletter of the  
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



*Mycena* sp., Blackwood – photo by Noel Young

## FUNGI:

### the rare and the where and how you can make a difference

John Walter spoke with great enthusiasm about fungi at the June General Meeting, providing both practical information on identification and an overview of the many and highly varied species of fungi that can be seen in our region. Starting with “how we can make a difference”, he compared the merits of some of the reference books available (brought along from his extensive library), and demonstrated a number of the websites that can be consulted, including Fungimap, where observations can be recorded.

Species can be rare in our region for several reasons – genuinely rare, such as the only known examples anywhere; rare locally but common in some distant places; or in unusual ecological sites, such as the species normally found only on Antarctic Beech trees in the Otways. John explores the Wombat Forest and further north to our area, and has discovered many new specimens. He illustrated “where” with a series of stunning images of an amazing range of fungi shapes, sizes, colours and sites. Some sites are very hard to access, hidden deep in steep gullies in the forest.

John mentioned two publications available through the FNCV website (<https://www.fncv.org.au>): *Fungi in Australia*, a 9 part set of free downloadable eBooks in pdf format; and, *A Little book of Corals* by Pat and Ed Grey.

The websites he demonstrated are:

**Atlas of Living Australia** - <https://www.ala.org.au> - is a collaborative, national project that aggregates biodiversity data from multiple sources and makes it freely available and usable online.

**Biodiversity Heritage Library** - <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org> - makes biodiversity literature openly available to the world as part of a global biodiversity community.

**Index Fungorum** - <http://www.indexfungorum.org> - is an international project to index all formal names (scientific names) in the fungus kingdom.

**Fungimap** - <https://fungimap.org.au> - maps the distribution of fungal species over time around Australia through the work of hundreds of volunteers – professional and amateurs – who submit the records of their observations.

John also offered to assist with identification of tricky examples. We were fortunate to be both entertained and informed by his extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for our local fungi.

– Peter Turner

## **Notes and Specimens from Wildlife magazine**

– July (1948)

George Broadway

Specimens which were sent in to Crosbie Morrison, Editor of “Wildlife” magazine and were described in the July ’48 issue. How many of these specimens have our readers found? If you find any of the following, or any other specimen which might be of interest, please report it or send it in to our editor. Here now is what readers found in June/July 1948, i.e. 70 years ago.

### **Insects**

Springvale: Your “beetle” was actually a sap sucking insect with the appearance of a beetle. It must have been transported to Victoria by some means or other, as it is an inhabitant of our tropical North where it feeds on the juice of the cotton plant and various species of Hibiscus. It belongs to a group called *Tectocoris*.

Ivanhoe: The long-whiskered, powerful-jawed Tree Cricket *Paragryllacris combusta*. See March and April Nos. It often comes to town in firewood. (I wonder if that is why it is named “combusta”)

Stawell: Small stoutly built Praying Mantis *Paroxypilus*. Yours was a wingless female which roams the bark of trees and feeds on smaller insects

Gnowangerup W.A. One of your specimens was a native bee. The other is a solitary “ant” which is not an ant at all but a wingless female wasp, *Ephutomorpha rugicollis*. Gleaming black intricately sculptured with patches of silvery-white hair forming dots on the body. Feeds on the young of its relatives, bees, ants and wasps. It has a formidable sting.

Double Bay. NSW. A Bladder fly *Oncodes basilis*, whose young are parasitic in the bodies of spiders. The thorax is large and bladder-like, the head and abdomen small.

Euroa: Handsome fly with large wings and dense golden velvety hair was a “Bee-fly” *Sisyromyia aurata*. So called because of their powers of flight and habit of haunting trees and shrubs in flower. The adult food is not known but the larvae are parasitic on the larvae of wasps, moths and butterflies.

Woorinen: Two sap sucking bugs, the smaller green one the “Vegetable Bug” previously described *Nezara viridula*, See Jan’17, Dec ‘16. An introduced species which has become a pest of beans and tomatoes. It is interesting to know that it is attacking grapes also. The brown one, also sap sucking, is similar to the Holy Cross Bug but smaller. Unable to give you the exact identity.



## Birds

Fletcher, Q There is no Australian bird which is only two inches (5 cm) long. The bird you saw was probably the little Brown Weebill, which is slightly over 3 inches (7.5 cm ), including tail; the smallest Australian bird.

Woolwich NSW: The copper wire ring on the Magpie was probably placed there by human agency, although In view of the fact that magpies frequently use pieces of quite thick copper wire scrap to build their nests it is conceivable that the bird became entangled in the wire but managed to break it off leaving only the ring. In answer to your second question, Stray White-backed Magpies may be found north of their traditional territory which is southern Victoria and South Australia. Your other bird may have been an abnormally marked Magpie or more likely a Pied Currawong.

Colac: On June 10 at 7 am. The first call of the Pallid Cuckoo. "never before heard so early in the year" Please report the first one you hear this year.

Tasmania: Mr C.C. Lawrence R.A.O.U. reported Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes over wintering in Tasmania instead of heading North like the rest of the population. Because of their migratory habits, in Tasmania they are called "Summer Birds".

## Spiders

Vasey: "Long-tailed Spider, *Arachnura higginsii* See also Oct '16, April '17. The "tail" is not a tail but an extension of the abdomen. The brown, ragged-looking string of objects were egg sacs, usually grouped to look like rubbish in the web.

Mentone: Orchard Spider or Bird Dropping Spider. Frequently mentioned in these pages. See Feb, May and August 2017.

## Botanical

Surrey Hills: The flower was a Stapelia, a native of South Africa where they take the place of the smaller cacti of the Western Hemisphere. There are many species, perfumed(?) to attract flies which are the pollinators. The result is somewhat offensive.

Rye: Barbara and Elizabeth have again produced the first Early Nancies of the season confirming that Rye is the earliest district in Victoria for the flowering of the "Harbinger of Spring", *Anguillaria dioica*.

The date of collection this year was May 22.

Who will find the first one in /around Castlemaine this year ?

## Snippets

Whaling: It was reported that the British Whale factory ship Baleana had taken three thousand whales in a four month expedition in the Antarctic. The meat and oil were valued at three million pounds. What would that be worth in today's money ?

Seals: For the first time in 40 years the Victorian Government has recently decided to allow the killing of two thousand seals, to begin in a few weeks. Some of the meat will be smoked for human consumption, oil will be extracted from the livers, and the skins may be made into fur coats.

Ants: The Rev. Rupp of Northbridge NSW reported success in dealing with an unwanted nest of ferocious bulldog ants using a strong DDT emulsion. The DDT was a well known brand for garden use.

# Fungi Excursion to Blackwood with John Walter 9/6/18

Geraldine Harris

Two full car loads of people braved the cold weather for our trip to Blackwood in search of fungi — the mix included long time field naturalists and some very new and very enthusiastic young naturalists on their first FN outing. John Walter was our speaker at the Friday night meeting and he met with us at Blackwood to guide us on our fungi foray.

The first activity was to visit the single tree that is host to the very, very unusual *Auriscalpium* sp. that John had talked about the previous evening. So small and insignificant were these tiny brown fungi on this large Peppermint, we would never have discovered them without John's expert knowledge of the site. And taking photos of their tiny toothed undersides, while hanging onto a fallen tree in order to stop sliding further down into the valley, proved a challenge for all but the expert photographers among us.



*Auriscalpium* sp. - the only known occurrence. Photo by Noel Young

Some fungi we saw included: green *Cortinarius austrovenetus*, tiny thread-like *Macrotypophula juncea*; a very delicate *Marasmius elegans* with its identifiable colour-graduated stem; a group of *Mycena albidocapillaris* showing the slender grey fruiting bodies as well as the non-fruiting threads of the fungi on a piece of dead wood; a *Pulveroboletus* aff. *revenelii* with its yellow pores that stained bluish green when bruised; a lovely mauve coloured coral-type *Ramaria* sp.; some *Trametes versicolor* or Rainbow Fungus; and the little fungi everyone is always delighted to find, the little blue umbrellas of *Mycena interrupta*. (see photos next page).

The dry conditions so far this year have not been very conducive to the formation of fungi fruiting bodies but we still managed to find 30-40 different fungi along the path with John's help and the enthusiastic assistance of our new young members. Fungi identification is difficult because there are so many different forms with difficult names but each time you venture out into the world of fungi with a fungi enthusiast you will be rewarded.

A list of fungi identified on the day is available on request.

Some recommended reference include:

**Field Guide to Australian Fungi** - 3rd edition, Bruce Fuhrer.

**Fungi Down Under** - the Fungimap Guide to Australian Fungi

**Fungi in Australia** - downloadable pdf available on line from FNCV





*Cortinarius austrovenetus*



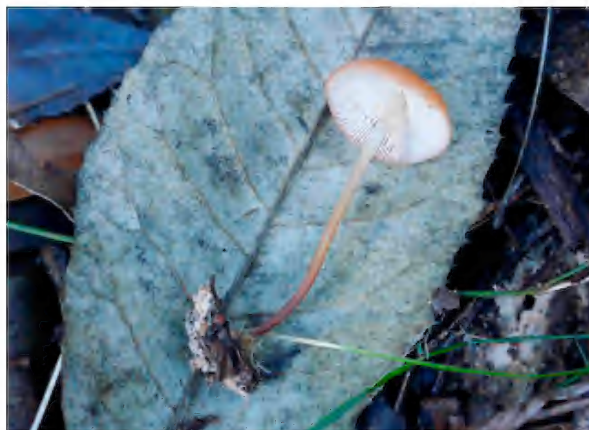
*Mycena interrupta*



*Macrotyphula juncea*



*Mycena albidocapillaris*



*Marasmius elegans*



*Ramaria sp.*



*Pulveroboletus aff. Revenelii*



*Trametes versicolor*

- Photos by Geraldine Harris

**Our speaker for the July meeting will be TANYA LOOS  
on Scientific monitoring at Connecting Country: a community effort**

Woodland birds, arboreal mammals, frogs and reptiles - what can these critters tell us about landscape health? Tanya Loos, Connecting Country's Monitoring and Engagement Coordinator, talks about the organisation's long term monitoring programs - how and why they were created, and what we have found so far. There will be a special emphasis on the contribution volunteers have made to the program's success.

Tanya has worked at Connecting Country for four years, and whilst mainly a birdo, is also a field naturalist and science writer. She lives on a bush block in Porcupine Ridge with her husband, dog and a number of rescue budgies and cockatiels.

**Protecting and managing grassy ecosystems in urban areas**

Peter Turner

Little of the originally widespread volcanic plains grasslands remain, especially close to Melbourne – the Kangaroo and Wallaby grasses, spear grasses and the rich variety of herbs, replaced by introduced pasture grasses, invasive weeds, the herbs eaten out by sheep. Zoe Thomson, Biodiversity Officer at Brimbank Council, spoke at our May meeting on the challenges of protecting what remains of the grasslands and local flora and fauna from encroaching development, and the common lack of awareness of the significance of this ecosystem. Her work in a variety of conservation-related roles over nearly two decades at Brimbank has included liaising with most of the council's departments, establishing restoration projects, and involvement with the community to develop support for conservation policies and practices.

Zoe described several major projects where she has worked with a team of colleagues, such as where degraded grasslands had been cleared of noxious weeds such as Chilean Needlegrass, and successfully restored with native grasses and herbs by direct seeding and replanting, often with active involvement of families. Another involved selection between two possible sites adjacent to a large industrial development at Derrimut – the restored area now a rich herb field, with a population of Striped Legless Lizards with a protected enclave. Work to save the local populations of these endangered lizards from extinction has been a significant focus, with mixed success (see the Joint Statement signed by 15 conservation groups, available on the CFNC website).

These were inspiring stories, revealing our guest speaker's broad skills, drive and perseverance in a challenging area of public service. The many questions and lengthy discussions during supper after the talk showed our appreciation of an exhilarating, stimulating presentation.

**Council support for the Needlegrass Project**

Chilean Needlegrass, and other stipoid weeds, are a real threat to our native grasslands and grazing pastures, but through the work of Margaret Panter, Ian Higgins and other volunteers, along with Community grants from Mt Alexander



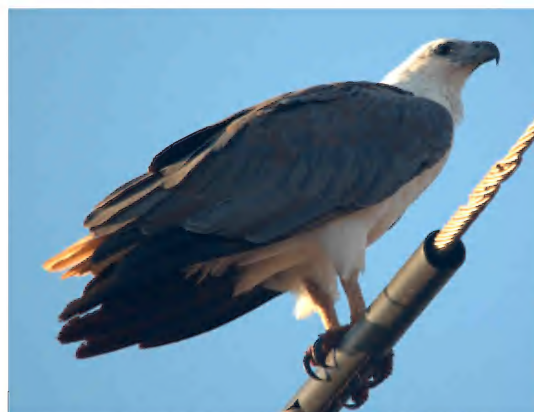
Shire Council, patches of these introduced weeds have been identified and controlled – see the report in the December 2017 *Castlemaine Naturalist*.

CNFC applied for a Community Grant earlier this year, and we were successful in obtaining \$3000 for *The Needlegrass Project – working towards eradication of stipoid weeds*. These funds will pay for a contractor to treat needlegrass outbreaks. Towards the end of the year we will be calling for volunteers to assist Margaret in digging out individual plants in the Botanical Gardens, as we did last year. Further details of the project will be announced in October.

## Bird Quiz

Nigel Harland

The bird featured last month was the White-naped Honeyeater. The white nape is the white “stripe” on the back of the neck, but the bird can be readily identified by the fact that it has a red crescent on the top of the eye. This bird can be found along the eastern coast of Australia and in southern parts of Victoria. There is a population in the south west of Western Australia.



The bird for next month is shown at right.

## Birds of Sutton Grange June 2018

Nigel Harland

Superb Fairy Wren	Eurasian Blackbird	New Holland Honeyeater
Australian Magpie	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	White-browed Scrubwren
Eastern Spinebill	White-winged Chough	Red Wattlebird
Crimson Rosella	Welcome Swallow	Galah,
Willie Wagtail	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
Long-billed Corella	Laughing Kookaburra	

## Observations reported at the June meeting

Dianne Thomson – Juvenile Red-bellied Black Snake

Geraldine Harris

1. Near Anglesea: White-lipped snake. This species is reported to be active in winter.
2. At Muckleford: An albino Red-rumped Parrot (white, with some yellow and red eye).

Dennis Hurley – Peaceful Doves visiting his garden

Rosa DeMaria – Powerful Owls at Newstead appear to have started nesting in large Red Gum along the Lodden

Geoff Harris – Scarlet, Yellow and Flame Robins at Barkers Creek

**Disclaimer:** The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

# **Castlemaine Field Naturalists**

## **Coming events**

**Fri July 13 meeting:** speaker TANYA LOOS of Connecting Country

**Sat July 14 field trip:** Connecting Country project – leader Tanya

**Fri August 10 meeting:** speaker DAMIEN COOK on wetlands renewal

**Sat August 11 field trip:** a local wetland area with Damien Cook

**Mon August 13:** Roadside clean-up. Organiser Geoff Harris

## **VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES**

**General meetings** - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

**Field Trips** - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

**Business meetings** - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

**Club website** (Web master: Chris Timewell) - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

## **Subscriptions for 2018**

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

## **2018 Committee**

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